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ABSTRACT

This curriculum module is designed to provide potential users with access to pedagogic techniques and scholarly works on the subject of social stratification in contemporary Asian societies that can be effectively integrated into appropriate sociology and other relevant courses. First, a set of goals and learning objectives is presented in an attempt to provide potential users with an overview of expected outcomes. This is followed by a pre-testing instrument for the evaluation of students' knowledge on Asian societies before the use of this module. Next, class exercises and activities are presented to serve the dual purpose of providing an interactive learning process involving students in group activities as well as illustrating the seriousness and practical consequences of human beings in such systems. Next, stratification concepts and issues are discussed, such as social differentiation, social inequality, legitimation and stratification systems, objective dimensions of stratification, social mobility, gender stratification, and the consequences and mitigating factors of stratification. This section also provides resources to further illustrate these concepts. Finally, a set of discussion questions is provided to help the instructors further evaluate students' understanding of the subject matter. (AJL)

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ED 407 972

SOCIOLOGY/ANTHROPOLOGY

"THE DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN CONTEMPORARY ASIAN SOCIETIES"

Use In: Introduction to Sociology

BY

AMBROSE INYANG

Asian Studies Module

St. Louis Community College at Meramec

JC 970 300

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The Dynamics of Social Stratification in Contemporary Asian Societies: A Curriculum Module

Designed By
Ambrose Inyang

As Part of a Title VI Program
on Undergraduate Global Studies
Sponsored by The Department of Education
and Supported by St. Louis Community College at Meramec

SLCC at Meramec
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The Dynamics of Social Stratification in Contemporary Asian Societies: A Curriculum Module[1]

INTRODUCTION

This curriculum module is designed to serve as an instrument that contributes to an international learning process and knowledge by providing potential users with access to pedagogic techniques and scholarly works on the subject of social stratification in contemporary Asian societies that can be effectively integrated into appropriate Sociology courses and other relevant courses. In accordance with this objective, the module addresses the subject of social stratification from a perspective that relates the relevant concepts and issues usually associated with this topic to specific countries in Asia and provides the basis for international comparisons and contrasts with the stratification systems in other countries representing the major geographic regions of the world. The concepts and issues addressed in the writing include social differentiation; social inequality; social stratification; progression of social inequality; legitimation; objective dimensions of stratification; social mobility; gender stratification; consequences of stratification; and the mitigating factors of stratification.

Before the examination of the above concepts and issues, a set of goals and learning objectives is presented in the first segment of the module in an attempt to provide potential users with an overview of the expected outcomes of integrating the subject of social stratification in Asian societies into the learning process. This is followed by a set of pre-testing instruments which can be useful in the evaluation of students'current knowledge on Asian societies before the utilization of the contents of this module. Some class exercises and activities are then presented in the next segment of the module to serve the dual purpose of providing an interactive learning process involving students in group activities as well as illustrating the seriousness and practical consequences of stratification systems as invisible social forces that impact the life circumstances of human beings in such systems. It is only thereafter that the above-mentioned examination of stratification concepts and issues is undertaken with the hope that this approach will provide both instructors and students who utilize this instrument of learning a systematic guide for class discourse by linking the objectives of the said exercises with the subject matter of stratification. A set of discussion questions is provided in the last section of the module to help the instructors further evaluate students' understanding of the subject matter.

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[1]The design of this curriculum module is part of a group project on global studies made possible by a Title VI grant from The Department of Education and release time granted by St. Louis Community College at Meramec. The author is grateful to the program directors, Professors Mary Angelides, Diane Carson, and Susumu Kassai, for giving him the opportunity to participate in this learning experience. The program secretary, Ms. Debra Ingles, deserves a worthy acknowledgement for her organizational skills which made the collective participation in this program a pleasant experience. The author would also like to thank Dr. Judy Leach, Chair of the Behavioral Sciences Department, and Dr. Walter Clark, Associate Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, for their consistent encouragement and support of international education programs in the school.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS	with corresponding	LEARNING OBJECTIVES
To expose students to the potential benefits of cross-cultural studies and stimulate their interest in adopting a cross-cultural approach in their subsequent scholarly undertakings.		Each student should be able to list five important things she/he has learned about stratification in each of the major geographic regions of the world. Each student should provide two reasons why she/he may adopt a cross-cultural approach in future studies.
To help students acquire a global understanding of the dynamics of social life by relating their life experiences to those of others in different cultures.		Each student should be able to explain the similarities and differences in her/his personal experiences in comparison with the experiences of those who live outside the student's culture.
To help students develop an enlightened understanding of stratification systems as social forces which impact the life circumstances of individuals in different cultures.		Students should be able to identify the specific constraints imposed on individuals by the stratification systems of their societies.
To demonstrate to the students the importance of sociology as a science of society that can provide us with an objective knowledge of social life capable of contributing to harmonious coexistence within the Human Family if used conscientiously.		Students should be able to describe how their knowledge of stratification can contribute to the creation of less constraining social systems and promote understanding among the different peoples of the world.
To demonstrate to the students the unique features, universal applicability as well as the limitations of modern science as a dominant knowledge process that guides learning in contemporary societies.		Students should be able to give specific examples of scientific concepts that can be used to analyze a particular aspect of social life in any society. They should be able to give specific examples of a condition of social life in any Asian society that illustrates the limitations of modern science as a universal knowledge process.

In some ways the preceding educational goals and learning objectives tend to reflect this writer's approach to the study of social life. In view of this condition, potential users of this curriculum module may modify these goals and objectives as they deem necessary. Those who require additional resources on the construction of such goals and objectives can benefit by reviewing the following works:[2]

(F) Eble, Kenneth E. The Craft of Teaching. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1988.

(F) Mager, Robert F. Measuring Instructional Results. Belmont, California: David S. Lake Publishers, 1984.

(F) _____. Preparing Instructional Objectives. Belmont, California: Pitman Learning, Inc., 1984.

PRE-TESTING INSTRUMENT

Before the introduction of the contents of this module into class discourse, the instructor should seek to acquire an understanding of the general level of students' knowledge on Asian societies. Such an understanding can be useful in helping the instructor determine what aspects of stratification in Asian societies should be emphasized during class lectures and discussions. A sample of questions that can help the instructor achieve this objective is provided below.

1. Which of the following countries are in the geographic region known as Asia?

   A. Pakistan and Egypt
   B. India and Nigeria
   C. France and China
   D. Thailand and Japan
   E. Canada and Vietnam

[2]The notations (F) and (S) are used to indicate appropriate readings for faculty and students respectively while (F&S) denotes works appropriate for both faculty and students.

2. The country with the largest population in the world is located in _____.

A. North America
B. Africa
C. Europe
D. Asia
E. The Middle East

3. _____ is the country with the largest population in the world.

A. United States
B. Brazil
C. China
D. Japan
E. Russia

4. Which of the following countries is usually included among the most advanced countries of the world by virtue of her high level of industrialization?

A. The Philippines
B. Japan
C. Laos
D. Bangladesh
E. Vietnam

5. _____ and _____ are two Asian countries usually included among the developing countries of the world.

A. The Philippines and India
B. Japan and Malaysia
C. Russia and Japan
D. Brazil and Vietnam
E. Spain and Australia

6. In which of the following Asian countries can we assume that there is an absence of structured social inequality?

A. China
B. Japan
C. Thailand
D. Sri Lanka
E. None

7. In which of the following countries can we assume there is an absence of gender inequalities?

   A. New Zealand
   B. Japan
   C. Indonesia
   D. Papua New Guinea
   E. None

8. The caste system is a formal system of stratification in _____.

   A. Canada
   B. India
   C. Australia
   D. China
   E. B and C

9. In about one paragraph of writing, explain what you currently know about social stratification in any Asian society.

10. In about one paragraph of writing, describe what you desire to learn about social stratification in Asian societies.

CLASS ACTIVITIES AND EXERCISES

The instructor can demonstrate to the students the impact of social stratification on the life circumstances of individuals by designing and utilizing approaches that can produce unequal results in the classroom notwithstanding the personal desires and efforts of the students. An example of such a strategy involves the division of students into four groups for the purpose of giving a quiz which can be described as part of the course requirements. Following this arrangement, the instructions below should be given to the students:

> Since there is general agreement here in class that desire and ability can overcome any structural barrier, I would like to test this conclusion. When I tell you to begin, group four will have two minutes in which to complete the quiz, group three will have four minutes to complete the quiz, group

two will have six minutes to complete the quiz, and group one will have ten minutes to complete the quiz.[3]

It is expected that students will complain about the unfairness of this arrangement. However,it is hoped that students will realize that determination and ability are not enough to succeed when barriers such as the ones inherent in this exercise exist. Since the important point of this exercise is to demonstrate how social inequality impacts the life circumstances of individuals, all the students who participated in this exercise will be given full credit at the end. It is important to note that the students will not know about this grading policy until the test papers are collected.

Examples of other pertinent activities and exercises that illustrate the constraining effects of social inequalities on human beings are provided in:

(F) David, Nancy J. "Teaching About Inequality: Student Resistance, Paralysis, and Rage." Teaching Sociology 20 (July 1992): 232-238.

DEFINING SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

One of the effective ways of working with students to define the concept of social stratification is to distinguish among social differentiation, social inequality, and social stratification. Social differentiation is a condition of distinct individual attributes or characteristics as well as distinct work roles which do not necessarily imply unequal treatment or ranking in society while social inequality represents a condition of unequal access to what is valuable in society on the basis of this differentiation. Both social differentiation and social inequality are preconditions for social stratification which represents an institutionalized form of social inequality that justifies an unequal distribution and access to societal rewards and resources. Further explanations of these and related concepts are presented in:

(F&S) Kerbo, Harold R. Social Stratification and Inequality: Class Conflict in Historical and Comparative Perspective. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1991.

The above distinction performs some important functions for students of stratification including the fact that it provides penetrating insights into the rationale concerning our assumptions and observations on the absence of formal systems of stratification during the thousands of years that our ancestors lived in hunting and gathering societies before their settlement in agricultural communities about 10,000 to 15,000 years ago. Students can learn about this condition of relative equality in the primitive communal system of

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[3] These instructions and the said activity are taken from:
(F) Eells, Laura Workman. "So Inequality is Fair? Demonstrating Structured Inequality in the Classroom." Teaching Sociology 15 (January 1987): 73-75

hunting and gathering societies by examining the social organization of life among the Andaman Islanders of Southeast Asia who constitute one of the hunting and gathering groups in the modern era. The pattern of life of the Islanders can be contrasted with that of our ancestors in defunct hunting and gathering societies as reconstructed with the aid of archaeological data. Two important works dealing extensively with these subjects are cited below:

(F&S) Lenski, Gerhard., and Lenski, Jean. Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1987.

(F&S) Radcliffe-Brown, A.R. The Andaman Islanders. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964.

PROGRESSION OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY

The relative equality in the primitive communal systems of our ancestors were transformed into conditions of progressive inequalities as different stratification systems emerged following the adoption of an agricultural-oriented way of life about 10,000 to 15,000 years ago. The stratification systems which emerged from this process include slavery, the caste system, feudalism, and contemporary class system. One of the most respectable works dealing with the factors that promoted this transformation from a condition of relative equality to conditions of progressive inequalities is:

(F) Lenski, Gerhard E. Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966.

An adequate overview of the above process is presented in:

(S) Harris, Marvin. "Life Without Chiefs." Pp. 105-109, in Elvio Angeloni, ed. Anthropology 95/96: Annual Editions. Guilford, Connecticut: The Dushkin Publishing Group, Inc., 1995.

The instructor can adopt a cross-cultural approach in this teaching unit by incorporating into class lectures the features of the feudal stratification systems that existed in China, Japan, and Medieval Europe. A similar comparative approach can be adopted when presenting lectures on the other forms of stratification systems mentioned above. Information on the aforementioned feudal stratification systems can be obtained from the following sources:

(F&S) Bloch, Marc. Feudal Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.

(F&S) Hsu, Cho-yun. Ancient China in Transition: An Analysis of Social Mobility, 722-222 B.C. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1965.

(F&S) Vlastos, Stephen. Peasant Protests and Uprisings in Tokugawa Japan. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986.

LEGITIMATION AND STRATIFICATION SYSTEMS

The significance of the legitimation process in sustaining a stratification system can be illustrated through an analysis of the Indian Caste system where religious beliefs provide the basis for adherence to its highly ritualistic and rigid ranks. Such an analysis can also provide insights into the unique difficulties faced by individuals in social systems where ascribed conditions are among the important criteria that determine the position or rank of an individual in a system of stratification. In this direction, comparison and contrast can be made among the Indian caste system, the defunct system of apartheid in South Africa, and the racial/ethnic stratification system in the United States. Useful data and pertinent information for such comparative analysis can be extracted from the works below:

(F&S) Berreman, Gerald D. "Race, Caste, and Other Invidious Distinctions in Social Stratification." Pp. 30-48, in Norman R. Yetman, ed. Majority and Minority: The Dynamics of Race and Ethnicity in American Life. Boston: Alyn and Bacon, 1991.

(F) Cox, Oliver Cromwell. Caste, Class, and Race: A Study in Social Dynamics. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1959.

(F) Dumont, Louis. Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

(F&S) Fredrickson, George M. White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

(S) Kolenda, Pauline. Caste in Contemporary India: Beyond Organic Solidarity. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1985.

(F&S) Massey, Douglas S. "American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass." American Journal of Sociology 96 (September 1990): 329-357.

OBJECTIVE DIMENSIONS OF STRATIFICATION

The economic, political, and social dimensions of stratification which are among the most important objective conditions of structural inequalities in contemporary societies can be examined separately and collectively in order to demonstrate how each factor

contributes to class distinctions in specific Asian countries and how the three factors interact to sustain such distinctions in these countries. The economic dimension of stratification as measured by the distribution of income and wealth among citizens of specific countries should provide empirical evidence for an assessment of the material well-being of these citizens against the background of their respective social classes. This particular teaching unit can also explore the condition of structured inequality from a global perspective by placing the different countries of Asia in their appropriate locations within the world stratification system by means of such measures as Gross National Product (GNP) and GNP per capita. With this approach, similarities and differences in the economic dimension of stratification within and between the major geographic regions of the world can be explored. The reliable sources of data for this teaching unit include the yearly publications of the United Nations and the World Bank on socioeconomic development whose respective latest editions are provided below:

(F&S) The United Nations. Human Development Report 1995. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

(F&S) The World Bank. World Development Report 1995. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

The relevant chapters on economic stratification within the world system presented in the texts that follow can also serve as good learning resources for this teaching unit.

(S) Bryjak, George J., and Soroka, Michael P. Sociology: Cultural Diversity in a Changing World. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1994.

(S) Macionis, John J. Sociology. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc. 1995.

(S) Thio, Alex. Sociology. New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1996.

The political dimension of stratification dealing with power inequalities and related issues like the patterns of such inequalities, the factors that sustain them, and contemporary challenges to this unequal arrangements can be integrated into class discourse through the examination of these conditions in Australia, India, Japan, Sri Lanka, and The Philippines. A collection of essays dealing with structural power inequalities in the aforementioned countries is presented in:

(F&S) Curtis, James., and Tepperman, Lorne., eds. Haves and Have-Nots: An International Reader on Social Inequality. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1994.

For the status or honorific dimensions of structural inequalities the above text also contains a collection of essays dealing with the dynamics of such inequalities in China,

India, Japan, and Taiwan. Another anthology with some essays dealing with this subject is:

(F) Cohen, Myron L., ed. Asia: Case Studies in the Social Sciences, A Guide for Teaching. New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1992.

SOCIAL MOBILITY

The concept of social mobility, the movement of individuals or groups within a social system, can be applied to an examination of the degrees of openness and closeness that exist in contemporary Asian societies through an analysis of the findings of studies that deal with intragenerational mobility and intergenerational mobility which respectively represent the patterns of changes in status or position during an individual's lifetime and that which occur between different generations. Such an analysis should provide students with objective information that can help them identify those Asian societies which can be considered relatively open due to the presence of significant levels of mobility and those societies which constitute relatively closed systems by virtue of their limited levels of mobility. Students should also be encouraged to make the distinction between horizontal mobility, movement from one position to another with relatively equal rankings, and vertical mobility which can bring about an upward or downward change in rank. A classic sociological work dealing with these concepts is:

(F) Sorokin, Pitirim. Social Mobility. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1927.

Students seeking further explanations on concepts associated with social mobility should read the relevant chapters on social stratification in the following texts:

(S) Bryjak and Soroka, Sociology: Cultural Diversity in a Changing World, 1994.

(S) Macionis, Sociology, 1995.

(S) Thio, Sociology, 1996.

The studies below deal primarily with social mobility in Asian countries including Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, Japan, South Korea, as well as Taiwan and contain data useful for cross-national comparisons especially in cases where Asian and non-Asian countries are included in the same models.

(F&S) Harris, M.S. "Land, Inheritance, and Economic Mobility: An Example from Bangladesh." Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development 18 (Fall/Winter 1989): 329-346.

(F&S) Ishida, Hiroshi. "Stratification and Mobility: The Case of Japan." Pp. 537-547 in Cohen, ed. Asia: Case Studies in the Social Sciences, A Guide for Teaching, 1992.

(F&S) _____., and Goldthorpe, John H., and Erikson, Robert. "Inter-generational Class Mobility in Postwar Japan." American Journal of Sociology 96 (January 1991): 954-992.

(F&S) Jones, F.L., Kojima, Hideo., and Marks, Gary. "Comparative Social Fluidity: Trends over Time in Father-to-Son Mobility in Japan and Australia, 1965-1985." Social Forces 72 (March 1994): 775-798.

(F) Miller, S.M. "Comparative Social Mobility". Pp. 254-269 in Celia S. Heller, ed. Structured Social Inequality: A Reader in Comparative Social Stratification. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987.

(F&S) Shuqi, Pang., and Liping, Qiu. "Preliminary Study of the Current Structure of Social Classes and Strata in China." Chinese Sociology and Anthropology: A Journal of Translations 21 (Winter 1989/1990): 5-20. Excerpted as "How Social classes are Changing in China", pp.69-74 in Curtis and Tepperman, eds. Haves and Have-nots: An International Reader on Social Inequality, 1994.

(F) Wong, Raymond Sin-Kwok. "Understanding Cross-National Variation in Occupational Mobility." American Sociological Review 55 (August 1990): 560-573.

(F&S) Yun, Young-Min. "Structure and Class Mobility in East Asia: A Comparison Among South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan". Korea Journal of Population and Development 23 (December 1994): 257-282.

GENDER STRATIFICATION

The subject of gender stratification provides a good illustration of the biases that characterize scientific undertakings dominated by male sociologists who, like their counterparts in other disciplines, have traditionally neglected analysis of female experiences as distinct forms of reality due to the perception that they are either extensions of male experiences or are subordinate to such experiences. In the area of stratification, these biases are especially reflected in studies of intergenerational mobility, which until the 1980's, were concentrated on the changes of status or positions occurring between fathers and sons. This condition of bias in stratification studies and the continuous neglect of female experiences in other areas of sociology are respectively examined in the following writings:

(F&S) Acker, Joan R. "Women and Stratification: A Review of Recent Literature." Contemporary Sociology 9 (January 1980): 25-39.

(F&S) Alway, Joan. "The Trouble with Gender: Tales of the Still-Missing Feminist Revolution in Sociological Theory." Sociological Theory 13 (November 1995): 209-228.

Students should be made to recognize that in spite of this historical neglect there are distinctive forms of social cleavages between females and males as can be seen in measures of various socioeconomic variables including life expectancy, educational attainment, income distribution, and share in the labor force. Among the reliable sources of data that demonstrate these differences in Asian societies are the yearly publications of the United Nations and the World Bank which also contain similar sets of data for non-Asian countries thereby providing relevant information for cross-national comparisons on gender stratification within the world community.

(F&S) The United Nations, Human Development Report 1995, 1995.

(F&S) The World Bank, World Development Report 1995, 1995.

Other pertinent topics on the economic, political, and social dimensions of gender stratification in different Asian countries including Bangladesh, China, India, Japan, and South Korea are examined in specific essays contained in the following works:

(F) Cohen, ed. Asia: Case Studies in the Social Sciences, A Guide for Teaching, 1992.

(F&S) Curtis and Tepperman, eds. Haves and Have-Nots: An International Reader on Social Inequality, 1994.

The studies below constitute additional sources of information on gender stratification in Asian societies:

(F&S) Ashraf, J., and Ashraf, B. "Estimating the Gender Wage Gap in Rawalpindi City." Journal of Development Studies 29 (January 1993): 365-376.

(F&S) Dickerson-Putman, J. "Women, Development and Stratification in the Eastern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea." Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development 23 (Spring 1994): 13-38.

(F) Entwisle, Barbara., and others. "Gender and Family Business in Rural China." American Sociological Review 60 (February 1995): 36-57.

(F&S) Soh, C. H.S. "Sexual Equality, Male Superiority and Korean Women in Politics: Changing Gender Relations in a 'patriarchal Democracy.'" Sex Roles 28 (January 1993): 73-90.

(F) Tinker, Irene. Persistent Inequalities: Women and World Development. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

(F) Wright, Erik Olin., Baxter, Janeen., and Birkelund, Gunn Elisabeth. "The Gender Gap in Workplace Authority." American Sociological Review 60 (June 1995): 407-435.

Because students will be presented with information for cross-national comparisons on gender stratification, it is important that the distinctive roles of different cultures on the stratification system of each society be emphasized. Insightful analyses of this subject are presented in the following writings:

(F&S) Derné , S. "Hindu Men Talk about Controlling Women: Cultural Ideas as a Tool of the Powerful." Sociological Perspectives 37 (Summer 1994): 203-207.

(F&S) Okin, S.M. "Gender Inequality and Cultural Differences." Political Theory 22 (February 1994): 5-24.

(F&S) Seneviratne, T. "Religion and Feminism: A Consideration of Cultural Constraints on Sri Lankan Women." Women's Studies International Forum 17 (November/December 1994): 593-607.

CONSEQUENCES OF STRATIFICATION

At this stage in the study of social stratification, it is expected that students would have already recognized the practical consequences of this institutionalized asymmetrical arrangement which serves as a structural blockage limiting and denying access to societal resources and positions necessary for the attainment of a meaningful social well-being in contemporary societies. The instructor should seek to reinforce this awareness by reminding students about the experiences they acquired from the exercise on, "So Inequality is Fair?", and by emphasizing the ascribed nature of some of the factors which form the basis of unequal distribution of opportunities and rewards in society. Accordingly, students should be made to recognize that individual desires, efforts, and sacrifices may be necessary for the attainment of our goals and social well-being but are usually insufficient. This condition is well depicted in the collection of essays dealing with the experiences of disadvantaged individuals and groups in Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, as well as The Philippines and presented in the source below:

(F&S) Curtis and Tepperman, eds. Haves and Have-Nots: An International Reader on Social Inequality, 1994.

Further insights into the experiences of disadvantaged individuals and groups in Asian societies can be achieved by reading the following:

(F&S) Bor, W., and others. "Socioeconomic Disadvantage and Child Morbidity: An Australian Longitudinal Study." Social Science and Medicine 36 (April 1993): 1053-1061.

(F) Lynch, Owen M. "Stratification, Inequality, Caste System: India." Pp. 67-80 in Cohen, ed. Asia: Case Studies in the Social Sciences, A guide for Teaching, 1992.

(F&S) McDonald, Hamish. "Born in Chains: Untouchables Still Struggle to Break Bonds of Caste." Far Eastern Economic Review 157 (November 3, 1994): 32.

(F&S) Suar, Damodar. "Discrimination Against the Girl Child in India." Social Action 44 (July/September 1994): 14-26.

MITIGATING FACTORS OF STRATIFICATION

Any objective study of social stratification should take into account the important mitigating factors on this condition especially when dealing with the countries usually described as developing countries. Because most contemporary Asian societies belong to this group of countries, one of the important mitigating factors which should be addressed in class lectures is the nature of economic activities in these societies which are excluded from conventional measures of economic productivity like Gross National Product (GNP). Class discussions on this subject should therefore address the fact that many members of the developing societies are directly involved in non-monetized economic activities which provide resources for their daily living without being included in measures of GNP and, accordingly, lower levels of GNP per capita do not necessarily reflect conditions of absolute poverty in many of these countries. Instructors who utilize this curriculum module can access the related writings on this subject cited below by consulting the author:

(F) Inyang, Ambrose. "A Postmodern Approach to the Study of Poverty." Paper presented at a graduate seminar on Postmodern Sociology. Texas Woman's University (Fall, 1991).

(F) _____. "A Postmodern Perspective on Development Theory." Paper presented at a graduate seminar on Sociological Theory. Texas Woman's University (Spring, 1993).

The significance of kinship systems in their contributions to the maintenance of the social well-being of many members of developing societies is another mitigating factor of stratification which should be incorporated into class lectures on this topic. Students should be made to recognize that some of these contributions may not be reflected in the kinds of objective measures of well-being regularly utilized in social science studies. This condition, once eloquently expressed in the quote below, should be taken into account when students of social life attempt to achieve an understanding of the life experiences of people in developing societies:

> A further fact - often overlooked - is that human well-being is not wholly reducible to quantitative terms. Psychological, anthropological and sociological studies seem to show that nonmaterial drives and achievements are fundamental in all social groups, and that how well or how poorly a particular society provides for their expression will notably raise or lower the individual's sense of well-being. Related studies seem to indicate, moreover, that some highly developed societies with high material standards of living leave the individual rather badly off in these nonmaterial respects - both absolutely and by comparison with societies that are less highly developed in an economic sense.[4]

Some insightful essays dealing with kinship systems in contemporary Asian societies are included in the anthology below:

(F) Cohen, ed., Asia: Case Studies in the Social Sciences, A Guide for Teaching, 1992.

The limitations of some of the scientific concepts expressed in this writing with respect to their inadequacies in depicting the conditions of life in Asian societies can also be demonstrated through an analysis of gender relations in those societies. An excellent work which can help students detect the limitations as well as the universal applicability of such scientific concepts is:

(F&S) Karim, Wazir Jahan. 'Male' and 'Female' in Developing Southeast Asia. Washington, D.C.: Berg Publishers, 1995.

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[4]This impressive observation is expressed in p.6 of Buchanan, Norman S., and Ellis, Howard S. Approaches to Economic Development. New York: Wm. F. Fell Company, 1956.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what way does the study of social organization in a contemporary Asian society demonstrate the absence of formal systems of stratification in hunting and gathering societies of the past?

2. Using the Indian caste system as a model, present an analysis of the significance of legitimation in a stratification system.

3. Explain the similarities and differences that exist between the stratification systems in Asia and those in:

   A. Africa
   B. Europe
   C. The Middle East
   D. North America
   E. South America

4. Choose one developing society in Asia and compare her stratification system with that of any non-Asian country of your choice.

5. Compare and contrast the stratification system in Japan with that of any non-Asian country usually included among the industrially-advanced countries of the world.

6. Utilizing empirical data on the objective dimensions of stratification, explain how the life circumstances of individuals in a specific Asian country are influenced by the social forces of their respective social classes.

7. Using information from class lectures and discussions, present an account of the practical consequences of stratification in contemporary Asian societies.

8. Present a scholarly account of gender inequalities in any Asian country of your choice. Compare and contrast such inequalities with those in any non-Asian country of your choice.

9. In what ways are some of the conditions of stratification in Asian societies mitigated by their economic and kinship systems?

10. Explain the usefulness and limitations of modern science as a knowledge process when applied to the study of stratification in contemporary Asian societies.

11. What new understandings have you achieved by virtue of class discourse on stratification in contemporary Asian societies?

12. In the process of class discussions on stratification we indicated that individual desires, efforts, and sacrifices may be necessary for the attainment of our goals and social well-being but are usually insufficient. Evaluate this statement from the perspective of a serious student of social life.

13. Can a serious student of social life design a social system with no formal system of stratification? Support your answer with factual empirical evidence.

CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

It is the impression of this writer that the construction of this curriculum module has been influenced by his teaching approach on social stratification. In view of this observation, potential users of this teaching instrument may want to modify it by incorporating into their class lectures aspects of social stratification not emphasized in this writing. Those who wish to examine other aspects of social life in contemporary Asian societies not directly associated with social stratification can benefit by reviewing the two texts below:

(F) Cohen, ed., Asia: Case Studies in the Social Sciences, A Guide for Teaching, 1992.

(F) Inkeles, Alex; and Sasaki, Masamichi., eds. Comparing Nations and Cultures: Readings in a Cross-Disciplinary Perspective. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1996.